

Minutes for the 10/21/08 meeting of the Newington Human Rights Commission:

Present: Monica Golec, Michael Munroe, Christine Andrews, Val Ginn Phyllis DiCara, Ken Freidenberg

Absent: Jeffrey Cultrera, Ann Cameron, Tim Manke, Scott McBride

The meeting commenced at 7:15 pm.

The first order of business was getting feedback from the HRC members that participated at the **Waterfall Festival on 10/4/08:**

Michael Munroe, Phyllis DiCara, and Christine Andrews were the HRC members that worked in the booth. They all agreed that the HRC booth was a huge success. It was estimated that 80 children participated in the activities at the booth. Age range for the children were 3 years old to 12 years old. The puppet making station was the favorite of the children followed by the information cards and the memory game. It was observed that talking about diversity prompted families to discuss their own heritage stories. A special thank you was given to the Boy Scouts that helped that HRC members in setting up and dismantling the tent used for the booth. It was agreed that the HRC should participate in next years Waterfall festival. The following are ideas that HRC members agreed would be helpful for next year's booth:

- Make sure that the HRC banner and the small country flags are available for use in the booth.
- Organize the space better for the activities in the booth. Precut all the items for the puppet making station. Use the same container type at each station. Bring paperweights to hold things down.
- Order enough of the information cards to be able to give them away. There was a lot of demand by visitors to the booth to be able to take the cards home with them.
- It was agreed to just have one display at the booth advertising the HRC food drive rather than handing out flyers.
- Have a camera available to take pictures that could be posted on the Town of Newington's website. Val Ginn stated that when taking pictures of children that consent from their parents must be given before the pictures could be posted on the website.

The next order of business was **Programs to consider for 2009.**

Ken stated that the HRC has its full budget of 1500 dollars to spend until June 30 2009.

Monica Golec spoke with someone at the Newington Library. The person at the Library stated that they had an opening for the HRC to sponsor a program on 2/17/09 at 6:30 pm during the school winter vacation week. It was agreed that the HRC should book this date - Monica will call the library to do so. It was also agreed that Monica would contact the person who was used by the HRC in the past for putting on a diversity program at the library. The HRC will pay for the program and also provide light snacks and beverages. The HRC will also make signs to direct people to where the event is happening in the library.

The library will publicize the event in their newsletter. It was agreed that the HRC could also publicize the event in the local media - Town Crier, Newington Life, etc. Ken stated in order for the HRC to publicize the event in the elementary schools parents newsletter, it must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools. Monica will email HRC members to let them know if this program will happen or not.

While discussing the Library program it was agreed that it could be beneficial to have a liaison from the Library on the HRC. Ken stated that he would talk to the Library Director about this idea.

It was agreed that the HRC would participate in the Memorial Day Parade again.

It was agreed that the HRC would have a food/toiletries drive in 2009 and that it would be promoted at the Waterfall Festival.

Other programs that were discussed as possibilities for 2009 were a Heritage Fair at the High School or doing something in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce Showcase in March. It was agreed that Monica and Scott could contact the Chamber about the HRC participating in their event.

The next order of business was the report of the ongoing **Food/Toiletries Drive**.

It was learned that Scott McBride reported the biggest response was from the French Travel Agency. Some businesses did not have anything in the bins but not all the bins had been collected by Scott yet. The Stop & Shop food drive on 10/5/08 did not happen as planned. It was agreed that better preparation was needed for the next time a food drive at Stop & Shop was planned.

Ken gave a quick update on the **Human Services Department** and distributed the September 2008 report.

Ken stated that the food bank is served 121 families last month. Demand is expected to increase in the future. Currently the food bank is open on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Families have made requests for the food bank to be open at night so that it would be more convenient for people who work during the day. Ken stated that more volunteers would be needed for this to happen. Christine offered to volunteer if the extended hours becomes a reality.

It was agreed that the next HRC meeting would take place in mid January. HRC members will be contacted by email once a firm date and time have been established.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Michael Munroe - Secretary